



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – October 18, 2010
Contact: Laura Oxley, ADHS Public Information: (602) 542-1094
Jeanene Fowler, Maricopa County Public Health: (602) 506-4926

ARIZONA STEPS UP FIGHT AGAINST INFECTIONS

Governor Declares Arizona Infection Prevention Week

From pandemic flu to antibiotic-resistant diseases, infections continue to be one of public health's strongest enemies. Governor Brewer declared this week *Arizona Infection Prevention Week* to help warn the public of the dangers of infection and its ability to stop them. The Arizona Department of Health Services and other public health partners want the public to help change the future with a video designed to teach people how to stop infections from spreading.

"Preventing infections, especially healthcare-associated infections or HAIs, is completely possible," said Will Humble, ADHS Director. "It's all based on good hygiene and best practices. When you look at the winnable battles set out by the CDC, preventing HAIs is really doable, if we all work together."

HAIs are infections that patients acquire in a healthcare setting when receiving treatment for other conditions. There are a few reasons why these infections occur:

1. People in hospitals are often already in a poor state of health and don't have strong immune systems to fight infection,
2. Invasive devices such as breathing tubes or catheters inserted into the bloodstream can provide an easy route for infections to enter the body, and
3. Some treatments like antibiotics can increase a person's risk of getting certain infections.

Nationally, HAIs account for an estimated 1.7 million infections and 99,000 deaths each year. To address the situation in Arizona, Senate Bill 1356 established the Infection Prevention and Control Advisory Committee (IPCAC) in September 2008. In February 2010, the HAI Advisory Committee was formed based on IPCAC's recommendations.

The HAI Advisory Committee's mission, to reduce the number and impact of HAIs in Arizona, is being achieved through its four subcommittees; Antimicrobial Stewardship, Prevention, Public Education and Surveillance. Each subcommittee is made up of volunteer members representing all disciplines of healthcare; public and private.

"We are all in this together to save lives and not cause undo harm to patients," said Jessica Rigler, HAI Advisory Committee Chair. "All of us on the Committee are dedicated to attacking this problem through community collaboration."

The Committee is launching a video contest to educate residents about preventing infections. The winning PSA will be awarded \$500 as well as receive statewide exposure. The prize is provided by the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology.

For more information on HAI's or to enter the Infection Prevention Video Contest, please visit www.PreventHAIaz.org.

For information on the CDC's "Winnable Battles": <http://www.cdc.gov/about/winnablebattles.htm>

###



Protecting Yourself from Healthcare-Associated Infections

There are things people can do to reduce their risk of acquiring a healthcare-associated or antibiotic resistant infection.

1. Be your own advocate

Some simple actions can help you protect yourself from infection:

- Wash your hands! Ask your doctors, nurses, and visitors to wash their hands too.
- Ask your doctor or nurse if you still need a catheter in your bloodstream or urinary tract.
- Ask your doctor or nurse how you can prepare yourself for surgery.

2. Don't take antibiotics if you don't need them

- Antibiotics are useful to treat bacterial infections but are not effective for viruses like cold or flu.
- If you have to take antibiotics, follow your healthcare provider's instructions – don't skip doses or stop taking antibiotics early even if you are feeling better.
- Do not share your antibiotics or take someone else's.

3. Get more information about specific types of infections.

Knowing the signs and symptoms of common infections will allow you to better prevent or recognize them. Recently, increased attention has been paid to specific infections that may be healthcare-associated. These infections are also present in the community.

- *Clostridium difficile*
- Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)
- Vancomycin-intermediate and Vancomycin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (VISA/VRSA)